

An unsettled period toward the end of 2023

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The last few days of 2023 are forecast to be unsettled, with strong winds, rain and even snow featuring in parts of the UK.

An area of low pressure which pushes in from the west on Saturday will be the most dominant feature in the forecast leading up to the new year. A number of weather warnings have been issued covering the likely impacts from this system.

A deep area of low pressure moves in from the west in the early hours of Saturday morning. This will initially affect Ireland and western parts of the UK. As the system moves eastwards, the boundary between the area of low pressure and the relatively colder conditions further north and east will lead to a band of transient snow across some of the high ground of northern England and Scotland. It is possible this snow could fall to lower levels for a brief period of time across Scotland.

The warnings for this low-pressure system include: a wind warning covering most of Wales and a large part of southern England; rain warnings for Northern Ireland and Wales; and a series of combined rain and snow warnings covering most of Scotland.

Andy Page is a Met Office Chief Forecaster. He said: “Parts of the higher ground of Scotland may see temporary snow accumulations of 5-10cm, while up to 25mm of rain is expected in Wales, Northern Ireland and lower levels in Scotland. Across Wales and southern England wind gusts of 45-50mph are likely to be quite widespread, while gusts of 65-75mph are possible in the most exposed coastal areas.”

Although daytime temperatures are expected to reach 11 or 12°C across the south of England, it remains colder in Scotland, where overnight temperatures could drop to -10°C across the Grampians.

Seasonal travel

With many people travelling during the Christmas and New Year period the RAC's Rod Dennis offers the following advice: “Storm Gerrit might have passed but, with another round of distinctly unsettled weather moving in, drivers are going to once again need to be ready to cope with difficult driving conditions in the run up to the new year.

“The most important thing they should do is reduce their speeds, especially on exposed and upland roads, and to always keep a firm hold of the steering wheel to avoid getting buffeted off course by the gusty winds. Driving slower also gives motorists more time to react to changing conditions up ahead – and this is particularly important during periods of very heavy rainfall which can quickly reduce vehicles’ grip on the road and make driving hazardous.

“Keeping up to date with the latest weather forecast from the Met Office before setting out, as well as checking traffic and road incidents on the free myRAC mobile app, is vital.”

An Environment Agency spokesperson said: “The Environment Agency is monitoring closely and has teams out on the ground undertaking preparatory activity to minimise the impacts of flooding where possible. At this time of year, with

people out walking over the festive and New Year period, it's particularly important to take care near riverbanks. If you are planning on travelling, please check the weather conditions ahead of your journey, and we urge people not to drive through flood water as just 30cm of flowing water is enough to move your car."

The outlook further ahead

Looking further ahead into 2024, there is low forecast confidence. Nick Silkstone is a Met Office Deputy Chief Forecaster. He said: "Through to mid-January, there is a signal for a shift in the pattern compared to the winter so far, with more settled and colder-than-average conditions becoming increasingly likely."

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